

§ 648.96 FMP review, specification, and framework adjustment process.

(a) *Annual review and adjustment process.* The NEFMC and MAFMC, the Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT), and the Monkfish Advisory Panel shall monitor the status of the monkfish fishery and resource.

(1) *Monkfish annual SAFE Report.* The PDT shall prepare an annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the monkfish fishery. The SAFE Report shall be the primary vehicle for the presentation of updated biological and socio-economic information regarding the monkfish fishery. The SAFE report shall provide source data for any adjustments to the management measures that may be needed for the Councils to meet the goals and objectives of the FMP.

(2) *Annual review.* The PDT shall meet at least annually to conduct a review of the monkfish fishery in relation to the goals and objectives specified in the Monkfish FMP, including a review of catch relative to the annual catch targets (ACTs) for each management area. They shall review available data pertaining to discards and landings; DAS and other measures of fishing effort; stock status and fishing mortality rate information, if available; enforcement of and compliance with management measures; and any other relevant information. Based on this review, the PDT shall provide guidance to the NEFMC and MAFMC regarding the need to adjust management measures to better achieve the FMP's goals and objectives. After considering the PDT's guidance, the Council may submit to NMFS its recommendations for changes to management measures, as appropriate, through the annual framework adjustment process specified in paragraph (a)(3) of this section, the in-season framework adjustment process specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or through an amendment to the FMP.

(3) *Annual framework adjustment procedures.* (i) If necessary based on the annual review, the Councils may develop adjustments to management measures to achieve the annual catch target (ACT) for the upcoming fishing year, and may develop other management options to better achieve the

goals and objectives of the Monkfish FMP, which may include a preferred option. The Councils must demonstrate through analysis and documentation that any options they develop are expected to meet the goals and objectives of the Monkfish FMP. Additionally, if necessary based on the recommendation of the NEFMC's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Councils may recommend measures to revise the ABCs and ACLs for the upcoming fishing year(s) as described in paragraph (c) of this section.

(ii) The range of options developed by the Councils may include any of the management measures in the Monkfish FMP, including, but not limited to: ACTs; closed seasons or closed areas; minimum size limits; mesh size limits; net limits; liver-to-monkfish landings ratios; annual monkfish DAS allocations and monitoring; trip or possession limits; blocks of time out of the fishery; gear restrictions; transferability of permits and permit rights or administration of vessel upgrades, vessel replacement, or permit assignment; measures to minimize the impact of the monkfish fishery on protected species; gear requirements or restrictions that minimize bycatch or bycatch mortality; transferable DAS programs; changes to the Monkfish Research Set-Aside Program; and other frameworkable measures included in §§ 648.55 and 648.90.

(iii) The Councils shall review the options analyzed by the PDT and other relevant information, consider public comment, and submit a recommendation to the Regional Administrator that meets the Monkfish FMP's objectives, consistent with other applicable law. The Councils' recommendation to the Regional Administrator shall include supporting documents, as appropriate, concerning the environmental and economic impacts of the proposed action and the other options considered by the Councils. Management adjustments made to the Monkfish FMP require majority approval of each Council for submission to the Secretary.

(A) The Councils may delegate authority to the Joint Monkfish Oversight Committee to conduct an initial review of the options analyzed by the

PDT and any other relevant information, consider public comment, and make a recommendation to the Councils.

(B) If the Councils submit a recommendation that is consistent with other applicable law but does not meet the Monkfish FMP's goals and objectives, the Regional Administrator may adopt any option developed by the Councils and analyzed by the PDT that has not been rejected by either Council, provided such option meets the Monkfish FMP's goals and objectives, and is consistent with other applicable law. If either the NEFMC or MAFMC has rejected all options, then the Regional Administrator may select any measure that has not been rejected by both Councils and that meets the Monkfish FMP's goals and objectives.

(iv) If the Councils submit, on or before December 1, a recommendation to the Regional Administrator after one meeting with each Council, and the Regional Administrator concurs with the recommendation, the recommendation shall be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER as a proposed rule, or as otherwise authorized under the Administrative Procedure Act. The Councils may instead submit their recommendation on or before February 1, if they choose to follow the framework process outlined in paragraph (b) of this section and request that the Regional Administrator publish the recommendation as a final rule. If the Regional Administrator concurs with the Councils' recommendation the recommended management measures may be published as a proposed rule or a final rule, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If the effective date of a final rule to implement the recommended measures falls after the start of the fishing year, fishing may continue under the existing regulations, but any DAS used by a vessel on or after the start of a fishing year shall be counted against any DAS allocation the vessel ultimately receives for that fishing year.

(v) Following publication of a proposed rule and after receiving public comment, if the Regional Administrator concurs in the Councils' recommendation, a final rule, if possible, shall be published in the FEDERAL REG-

ISTER prior to the start of the next fishing year. If the Councils fail to submit a recommendation to the Regional Administrator by February 1 that meets the goals and objectives of the Monkfish FMP, the Regional Administrator may implement through rule-making in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act one of the options reviewed and not rejected by either Council, provided the option meets the goals and objectives of the Monkfish FMP, and is consistent with other applicable law.

(b) *Within-season management action.* At any time, the Councils or the Joint Monkfish Oversight Committee (subject to the approval of the Councils' Chairmen) may initiate action to add or adjust management measures if it is determined that action is necessary to meet or be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Monkfish FMP.

(1) *In-season Framework adjustment procedures.* (i) Framework adjustments shall require at least one initial meeting of the Joint Monkfish Oversight Committee or one of the Councils (the agenda must include notification of the framework adjustment proposal) and at least two final Council meetings, one at each Council. The Councils shall provide the public with advance notice of the availability of both the proposals and the analysis, and opportunity to comment on them prior to the first of the two final Council meetings. Framework adjustments and amendments to the Monkfish FMP require majority approval of each Council for submission to the Secretary.

(ii) Recommended adjustments to management measures must come from the categories specified under paragraph (a)(3)(i) of this section, including specification of ABC and ACLs, if necessary.

(2) *Councils' recommendation.* After developing management actions and receiving public testimony, the Councils shall make a recommendation to the Regional Administrator. The Councils' recommendation must include supporting rationale and, if management measures are recommended, an analysis of impacts and a recommendation to the Regional Administrator on whether to issue the management measures as a final rule. If the Councils

recommend that the management measures should be issued as a final rule, the Councils must consider at least the following four factors and provide support and analysis for each factor considered:

(i) Whether the availability of data on which the recommended management measures are based allows for adequate time to publish a proposed rule, and whether regulations have to be in place for an entire harvest/fishing season;

(ii) Whether there has been adequate notice and opportunity for participation by the public and members of the affected industry in the development of the Councils' recommended management measures;

(iii) Whether there is an immediate need to protect the resource or to impose management measures to resolve gear conflicts; and

(iv) Whether there will be a continuing evaluation of management measures adopted following their implementation as a final rule.

(3) *Adjustments for gear conflicts.* The Councils may develop a recommendation on measures to address gear conflict as defined under § 600.10 of this chapter, in accordance with the procedure specified in § 648.55(g) and (h).

(4) *Action by NMFS.* (i) If the Regional Administrator approves the Councils' recommended management measures and determines that the recommended management measures should be issued as a final rule based on the factors specified in paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section, the Secretary may, for good cause found under the standard of the Administrative Procedure Act, waive the requirement for a proposed rule and opportunity for public comment in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The Secretary, in so doing, shall publish only the final rule. Submission of the recommendations does not preclude the Secretary from deciding to provide additional opportunity for prior notice and comment in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(ii) If the Regional Administrator concurs with the Councils' recommendation and determines that the recommended management measures should be published first as a proposed rule, then the measures shall be published as a proposed rule in the FED-

ERAL REGISTER. After additional public comment, if NMFS concurs with the Councils' recommendation, then the measures shall be issued as a final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(iii) If the Regional Administrator does not concur, then the Councils shall be notified in writing of the reasons for the non-concurrence.

(c) *Process for setting ABCs and ACLs.*

(1) The Councils or the PDT may develop options for setting ABC, ACL, and OFL for each monkfish stock, as necessary, as part of the annual review and adjustment process specified in paragraph (a) of this section, or as otherwise deemed necessary following the in-season adjustment process specified in paragraph (b) of this section. These options shall be submitted to the SSC for consideration. The Councils or the PDT may recommend to the SSC that ABC, ACL, and OFL are specified for each monkfish stock for multiple years as determined necessary to best align management with the stock assessment process for this fishery.

(i) *ABC recommendation.* The Councils or the PDT shall calculate ABC values for each monkfish stock based on the ABC control rule established in the FMP. These calculations shall be reviewed by the SSC, guided by terms of reference developed by the Councils. The SSC shall either concur with these ABC calculations, or provide alternative recommendations for each stock and describe the elements of scientific uncertainty used to develop its recommendations. If the SSC concurs with the ABC calculations, the revised ABC values are automatically updated and no action by the Councils is necessary. If the SSC provides an alternative recommendation for calculating the ABC than that currently specified in the FMP, the Councils would need to need to take action through the annual or in-season framework adjustment process specified in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, respectively, to implement the SSC's recommendation. The SSC may also consider other related issues specified in the terms of reference developed by the Councils, including, but not limited to, OFLs, ACLs, and management uncertainty.

(ii) *ACL recommendations.* The Councils shall establish ACLs for each management area that are equivalent to the ABCs calculated using the control rule established in the FMP, and reviewed and recommended by the SSC.

(iii) *Timing.* If determined necessary under the annual review process, the Councils shall develop and approve any recommendations for ABCs and ACLs prior to December 31, to the extent possible. Once the Councils have approved the recommended ABCs and ACLs, only if they require adjustments to the ACTs described in paragraph (d) shall they be submitted to NMFS as part of an annual framework adjustment or in-season framework adjustment, as described in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, along with any necessary analysis required by applicable law. After receipt of the Councils' recommendation for ACLs, NMFS shall review the Councils' decision and, if consistent with applicable law, implement the ACLs in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

(d) *Accountability Measures (AMs).* (1) *Specification of ACTs.* Through the annual review process described in paragraph (a) of this section, or as otherwise determined necessary, the Councils shall specify ACTs for each management area that are set sufficiently below the ACL to account for management uncertainty and prevent the ACL from being exceeded. The ACTs established for each management area shall be the basis for setting management measures (DAS and trip limits), after accounting for incidental catch in non-directed fisheries and discards in all fisheries.

(2) *ACL overages and adjustments—* (i) *Council action.* The Councils shall revise the ACT for a monkfish stock if it is determined that the ACL was exceeded in any given year, based upon, but not limited to, available landings and discard information. The amount of an ACL overage shall be deducted from the ACT for the corresponding monkfish stock on a pound-for-pound basis. The revised ACT and corresponding management measures (DAS and trip limits) shall be implemented through either the annual or in-season framework adjustment process, specified in paragraphs (a) and (b)

of this section, in the second fishing year following the fishing year in which the ACL overage occurred.

(ii) *NMFS action.* If the Councils fail to take appropriate action to correct an ACL overage consistent with paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section, the Regional Administrator shall implement the required adjustment, as described in paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section, including the specification of DAS and trip limits using a formulaic approach developed by the PDT, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act and other applicable law. Notification of the proposed ACL revision and DAS and/or trip limit adjustments shall be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER no later than January 1, if possible, for implementation on May 1 of the second fishing year following the fishing year in which the ACL overage occurred.

(e) *Emergency action.* Nothing in this section is meant to derogate from the authority of the Secretary to take emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

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§ 648.97 Closed areas.

(a) *Oceanographer Canyon Closed Area.* No fishing vessel or person on a fishing vessel may enter, fish, or be in the area known as Oceanographer Canyon Closed Area (copies of a chart depicting this area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request), as defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated, while on a monkfish DAS:

OCEANOGRAPHER CANYON CLOSED AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
(1) OC1	40°10'	68°12'
(2) OC2	40°24'	68°09'
(3) OC3	40°24'	68°08'
(4) OC4	40°10'	67°59'
(5) OC1	40°10'	68°12'

(b) *Lydonia Canyon Closed Area.* No fishing vessel or person on a fishing vessel may enter, fish, or be in the area known as Lydonia Canyon Closed Area (copies of a chart depicting this area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request), as defined